



MINUTES
FEBRUARY 10, 2015
LAURENS COUNTY COUNCIL
HISTORIC COURTHOUSE – PUBLIC SQUARE
COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ATTENDANCE: **COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT-** County Council Chairman Joe Wood; Vice Chairman Keith Tollison; County Council Members: Diane Anderson, Stewart Jones, Ted Nash and David Pitts.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT – Councilman Edward McDaniel (illness).

COUNTY STAFF: Laurens County Administrator, Ernest Segars; Laurens County Clerk to Council Betty Walsh and Laurens County Attorney, Sandy Cruickshanks.

DEPARTMENT HEADS PRESENT: Laurens County Human Resources Manager, Debi Parker; Laurens County Communications Director, Joey Avery; Laurens County Coroner, Nick Nichols; Laurens County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director, Andy Howard; Laurens County Sheriff, Ricky Chastain; Laurens County Emergency Medical Services Director, Chad Burrell; Laurens County Fire Director, Gregg Lindley and Captain Tyson, Detention Center Administrator.

PRESS: Vic McDonald, *The Clinton Chronicle*; Iva Cadmus, *WLBG Radio* and Corey Engle, *The Laurens County Advertiser*.

SCHEDULED MEETING AGENDA ITEMS - **1.)** Call to Order – Chairman Wood; **2.)** Invocation – Vice Chairman Tollison; **3.)** Pledge of Allegiance; **4.)** Approval of Agenda, February 10, 2015; **5.)** Approval of Minutes – January 27, 2015; **6.)** Second Reading, Ordinance #781, “An Ordinance Consenting To An Assignment Of Interests Under Various Incentives Agreements With Laurens County, South Carolina By Uniscite, Incorporated, Project Flex, LLC, And Glad Shine International, LLC To Project Laurel; Authorizing The Amendment Of That Certain Infrastructure Finance Agreement Dated January 1, 2012 Between Laurens County, South Carolina And Uniscite, Incorporated, Project Flex, LLC And Glad Shine International, LLC, And Other Matters Related Thereto”; **7.)** First Reading, Ordinance #782, “To Provide For The Issuance And Sale Of Not Exceeding Two Million Four Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$2,450,000) General Obligation Bonds Of Laurens County, South Carolina (Laurens County Fire District), For The Issuance Of Notes In Anticipation Of Such Bonds, To Prescribe The Purposes For Which The Proceeds Of Such Obligations Shall Be Expended, To Provide For the Payment Thereof, And Other Matters Relating Thereto”; **8.)** Reconsideration of funding assistance – Hunter Industrial Park Improvements - Laurens City Commission of Public Works. **9.)** Approval of Agency requested allocations – Laurens County Accommodations Tax; **10.)** Administrative Report, Ernie Segars, County Administrator; **11.)** Approval of appointments to the Laurens County Grievance Committee; **12.)** Public Comments; **13.)** Comments from Council Members; **14.)** Adjournment; **15.)** Executive Session, Employment Matter.

MEETING NOTIFICATION - The County Council Members, Department Heads, requesting general public and the Press were informed of the budget session meeting in a timely manner.

CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Wood called the meeting to order and invited all to stand for the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice Chairman Tollison provided the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Chairman Wood called for approval of the agenda with any additions.

COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION to approve the agenda as presented; VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.



APPROVAL OF MINUTES – COUNCILMAN NASH made the MOTION to approve the minutes from the January 27, 2015 regular session of Council. COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

SECOND READING - ORDINANCE #781 - AN ORDINANCE CONSENTING TO AN ASSIGNMENT OF INTERESTS UNDER VARIOUS INCENTIVE AGREEMENTS WITH LAURENS COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA BY UNISCITE, INC., PROJECT FLEX, LLC, AND GLAD SHINE INTERNATIONAL, LLC TO PROJECT LAUREL; AUTHORIZING THE AMENDMENT OF THAT CERTAIN A INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE AGREEMENT DATED JANUARY 1, 2012 BETWEEN LAURENS COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA AND UNISCITE, INC., PROJECT FLEX, LLC, AND GLAD SHINE INTERNATIONAL, LLC, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO – Sandy Cruickshanks, County Attorney stated, “This project is an acquisition by a company known presently as Project Laurel of the existing site known as Unicite. This is a twenty million dollar (\$20,000,000) expansion and the addition of new jobs”.

COUNCILMAN JONES made the MOTION to approve Ordinance #781 upon second reading as presented with VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

FIRST READING, ORDINANCE #782, “TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF NOT EXCEEDING TWO MILLION FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,450,000) GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS OF LAURENS COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA (LAURENS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT), FOR THE ISSUANCE OF NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH BONDS, TO PRESCRIBE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE PROCEEDS OF SUCH OBLIGATIONS SHALL BE EXPENEDED, TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT THEREOF, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO” – Chairman Wood called upon Mr. Gregg Lindley, Laurens County Fire Director to provide a brief overview. Mr. Lindley said, “This will help to bring existing fire stations up to code and will address many safety issues. This also includes the building of and rebuilding of fire stations”.

Chairman Wood asked for a first reading motion towards Ordinance #782. VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON made the MOTION with COUNCILMAN NASH SECONDING to approve Ordinance #782 as the General Bond Ordinance for the improvements within the fire service within Laurens County.

Councilman Jones stated, “I am one hundred percent (100%) in favor of the plan but I do not intend to vote for this due to it including a tax increase. I am looking at the bigger picture of taxes and the local government fund. The people are already paying enough in taxes across the board. We have nine hundred eighty five thousand dollars plus (\$986,000 +) in the Local Government Fund that the State is not giving back to us. I am looking into retrieving these funds so that we can improve our services in Laurens County”.

Chairman Wood stated, “Any funds received from the Local Government Fund could not be used for the Fire Service and that funds could only be taken from the unincorporated areas of the County. The only means of funding this project would be with General Obligation Bonds”.

Councilman Nash said, “This Fire Department issue has been handled well by the volunteers. We know that we can not afford to fix all of the problems with the rural fire departments; this is a means of fixing and correcting the problems we have now. This has been an ongoing discussion for many years and I think this is right thing to do. I am for the General Obligation Bond”.

Vice Chairman Tollison said, “This subject has been on the drawing board for quite a few months now. I’ve talked to many people and insurance agencies to help me determine with my decision as to what is best to do for this County. I do understand that this is a tax increase; a small increase. I feel very adamant that the payoff in the long run for the citizens of Laurens County will be a good thing. I feel that we, the Council, have not made any major improvements in many years. The first to consider is the safety within these departments. This is



something that we have to do...we can not know about safety issues and not do anything about it. We are on the right track and I will be voting in the affirmative”.

Councilwoman Anderson said, “I feel we should take advantage of these interest rates now. It is more feasible to commit to the interest rates of the general obligation bond now and not later when the rates will be much higher. It would be a bad situation if we reach the point to say...I wish we had. This is for the safety of our citizens”.

Referring to page ten (10) of the Ordinance, Councilman Pitts asked for clarification as to referring...all taxable property in the district. Attorney Cruickshanks replied that it was all real and personal property within the new Unified District and does exclude the City of Laurens and Clinton.

Chairman Wood said, “Nobody hates paying taxes worse than I do. This amounts to ten dollars (\$10.00) on a one hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000) house. I look at it as that we are going to get a return back on our monies even if it is twenty dollars (\$20.00) a year. Do I have reservations about this, yes I do. I have reservations about building new buildings for insurance purposes. There is a possibility that it will bring the whole county down to a ISO four rating. Another reservation that I have about the fire service is that we have twenty (20) mills going into fire service already in Laurens County. When this is all said and done, there will be five (5) more buildings to keep up. I want the Fire Director to keep that fact in mind. We have twenty (20) mills of tax and that is all we have”.

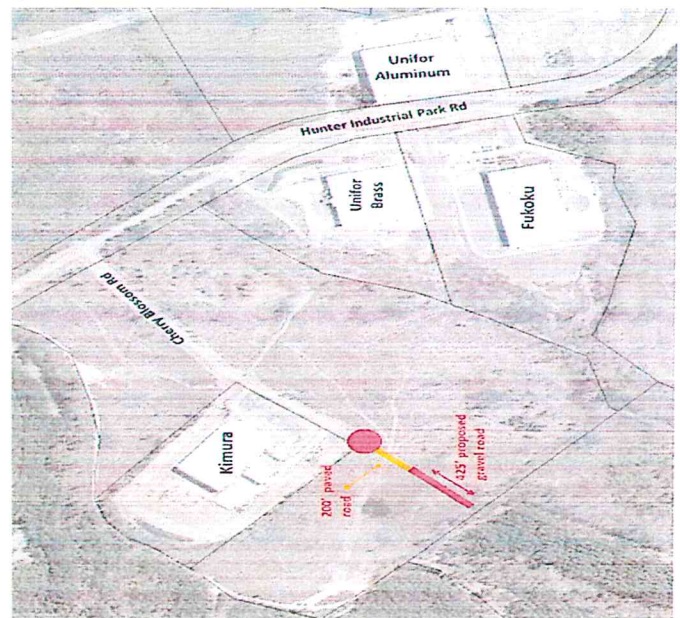
Continuing Chairman Wood said,” I want to continue by addressing the addition of stations with living quarters before we do build. There is money in there to build but, that does not mean we will positively build these stations with living quarters. I want to ask for monthly reports of the progress of this project – progress on what has been accomplished, how the money was spent and who to. This report will come in the second meeting of every month. Another comment is that this has nothing to do with the Fountain Inn contract. We have an agreement explanation for those that do not want to assign their building over to the County as exhibit five (5). I want this to be interpreted into words that a normal person could read and understand and not just lawyers.”

COUNCIL VOTED 4-2 – Council Members Jones and Pitts were in opposition.

RECONSIDERATION OF FUNDING ASSISTANCE – HUNTER INDUSTRIAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS – LAURENS CITY COMMISSION OF PUBLIC WORKS - Mr. John Young, Manager of the Laurens Commission of Public Works, appeared before Council to request Council consideration of rescinding the earlier Hunter Fund allocation approved in July of 2013 in the amount of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to Laurens Commission of Public Works for the improvements necessary to make Hunter Park a Class A Park

Mr. Young stated, “The Commission of Public Works has decided to not to proceed with those improvements at this time and to request instead, an allocation of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from the Hunter Park Economic Development Fund to extend Cherry Blossom Road (located within the Hunter Park) to the back property line of the park. Two hundred feet (200’) will be paved while four hundred twenty five feet (425’) would be graveled”.

Chairman Wood asked if the noted price was from the one bid noted or was it an only bid. Mr. Young replied that it was the only bid for now due to time related issues and that two (2) more are expected.





Chairman Wood asked for a motion towards rescinding the earlier project funds of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000). VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON made the MOTION to void the earlier allocation of project funds of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) with COUNCILMAN PITTS SECONDING; COUNCIL VOTED 6-0.

COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION to approve and to not exceed the allocation of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from the Hunter Park funds to extend Cherry Blossom to the back property line of the park. COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON SECONDING for discuss.

Vice Chairman Tollison questioned if not part of that property noted was privately owned. Mr. Marvin Moss, Executive, Laurens County Development Corporation stated that it would allow access to forty (40) acres of the Park as well as the Fleming/Smith property.

Councilman Nash said, "Years ago, monies were set aside for the widening of Highway #14 and was never used and went to the Hunter Park. If we keep spending money there, the Development Corporation could come up with monies for this project instead of the taxpayers".

Councilman Jones stated that he wanted to see more bids.

Administrator Segars explained, "Several years ago, Laurens County Council, School District #55 and the City of Laurens agreed to apportion fees and taxes generated from the Hunter Industrial Park. Those amounts were Twenty five percent (25%) to Laurens County, Twenty five percent (25%) to School District #56, Twenty five percent (25%) to City of Laurens and Twenty five percent (25%) to an Economic Development Fund to be used primarily for Hunter Park improvements.

COUNCIL VOTED 3-3. Council Members Jones, Nash and Wood voted in opposition.

APPROVAL - AGENCY REQUESTED ALLOCATIONS – LAURENS COUNTY ACCOMMODATIONS TAX - Mr. Andy Howard, Director of the Laurens County Parks, Recreation and Tourism presented the following as the final agency allocations using the Accommodations Tax monies:

ATAX Requests / Recommendations FY 2014-2015

Organization	Contact Person	Event or Destination that funds will be used for	Funds requested	ATAX Committee Recommendation	PRT Commission Recommendation
Clinton Business Assoc. Town Rhythms	Dianne Wyatt	Town Rythms	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Laurens County Museum Assoc.	Margaret McIntyre	Museum	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Hospice of Laurens Co. Flight Of The Dove	Catherine Gambrell	Flight of the Dove	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Town Of Waterloo	Barbara Smith	Cotton Festival	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Main Street Laurens Squelin' on The Square	Jonathan Irick	Squealing on the Square	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Ware Shoals Catfish Feastival	Nancy Wrenn David Abrams	Catfish Feastival	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Town of Cross Hill	Ree Simpson	Coming Home to Cross Hill Festival	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Laurens County Parks	Andy Howard	Renovations to County Park(s)	Remaining Funds	Remaining Funds	Remaining Funds
			\$ 20,000.00	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 14,000.00



Councilman Jones asked how these funds were collected. Administrator Segars explained, “These are monies collected from the accommodation tax within a County or City from taxes on accommodations. A County receiving more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from accommodations taxes has to appoint an Advisory Committee to make recommendations towards the expenditure of these funds. These funds are sent to the State and then circulated back to a County quarterly to go towards a fund to help with attracting people from outside their home communities by community festivals and events. The allocations are broken out with the first twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) allocated to the general fund of the County; another five percent (5%) to the County general fund; thirty percent (30%) of the remaining amount going to the Chamber of Commerce with the remaining amounts being distributed to the requesting agencies”.

COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION to approve the noted allocations with VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDDING.

Councilman Pitts asked if all of the agencies were 5013C agencies. Mr. Howard replied that they were.

Vice Chairman Tollison asked if all the Boards had met and approved the distribution of the funds as described. Mr. Howard replied that they had.

COUNCIL VOTED 6-0 to approve the allocations as presented.

Chairman Wood asked for all to keep the family of Mr. Bill Erkes, a former Director of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, in their thoughts and prayers as Mr. Erkes had passed away this past week.

APPOINTMENT(S) APPROVAL – LAURENS COUNTY GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE – In review, Administrator Segars said, “In the personnel policy of the County, it states that an employee who has a grievance for various reasons, can address a Council appointed Grievance Committee with their concerns. Before we get to the appointments, the Staff would like for Council to approve, by Resolution in title only, to increase the number of positions on the Committee from five (5) to seven (7) so as to make the Committee more consistent with other appointed Boards and Commissions”.

A.) **RESOLUTION #2015-01 – “A Resolution of Laurens County Council to Amend the Employee Handbook; And Other Matters Related Thereto” –**

- a.) **Appointed number to Grievance Committee - Present language** – “4.1 The County Council shall appoint a Committee composed of five (5) employees to serve for terms of three (3) years, except that the members appointed initially shall be appointed so that their terms will be staggered, and approximately one-third (1/3) of the terms shall expire each year. A member shall continue to serve after the expiration of this term until a successor is appointed. An interim appointment to fill a vacancy for any cause prior to the completion of a member’s term shall be for the unexpired term. Any members may be reappointed for succeeding terms at the discretion of County Council. All members shall be selected on a broadly representative basis from among county employees. Members employed in the same department as the grieving employee and members having formed an opinion on the issues prior to the hearing, shall not participate in that employee’s hearing.”

- Amended language - “4.1 The County Council shall appoint a Committee composed of seven (7) employees to serve for terms of three (3) years, except that the members appointed initially shall be appointed so that their terms will be staggered, and approximately one-third (1/3) of the terms shall expire each year. A member shall continue to serve after the expiration of this term until a successor is appointed. An interim appointment to fill a vacancy for any cause



prior to the completion of a member's term shall be for the unexpired term. Any members may be reappointed for succeeding terms at the discretion of County Council. All members shall be selected on a broadly representative basis from among county employees. Members employed in the same department as the grieving employee and members having formed an opinion on the issues prior to the hearing, shall not participate in that employee's hearing."

- b.) Present language – "4.3 A quorum shall consist of at least three (3) members, and no hearings may be held without a quorum."

Amended language - "4.3 A quorum shall consist of at least four (4) members, and no hearings may be held without a quorum."

VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON made the MOTION to approve the amending number of appointees as well as the quorum requirements for the Grievance Committee with COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

- B.) COUNCILMAN NASH made the MOTION to approve the following names submitted for appointment to the Laurens County Grievance Committee as recommended. COUNCILMAN JONES SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

Madge Byrd, Leslie Campbell, Charles Boyce, Sherry Edge, Joey Holmes, Jimmy Sharpton and Kurt Thackston. Three terms expiring in 2015 and four term expiring in 2017.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

- 1.) Administrator Segars reminded all of an awards ceremony February 20th, 11:00 AM, Emergency Services Building, Training Room, 321 South Harper Street. This will be the awarding of grants totaling \$16,748 to the Renno, Hickory Tavern, Durbin Creek and Waterloo Fire Departments.
- 2.) Administrator Segars reminded all of the scheduled Open House for the Ekom Beach Fire Department, Saturday, February 28th, 10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON.
- 3.) Administrator Segars informed all of the passing of Ethel McDaniel, mother of Councilman Edward McDaniel. Visitation is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2015, 6:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M., Beasley Funeral Home; Services, Friday, February 13, 2015, 11:00 AM, Poplar Springs AME Church.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Chairman Wood opened the floor for public comment at 6:15 P.M. by saying this is not a stage for any grievances or addressing any particular person.

- 1.) Mr. Ryan Thorne approached Council stating, "It was brought to my attention last week that Hayes Ambulance Service has been allowed to participate in the mutual aid agreement with Laurens County EMS. What concerns me about this is that anyone who has attended these meetings knows of the problems encountered over the past year or so by EMS and other private agencies. Mr. Segars has also spoken at a meeting of a cease and assist order towards this provider because of the problems associated with this provider because of different tactics they were providing in order to generate business and take over 911 calls that belonged to Laurens County EMS. In addition I also have police and incident reports".

Chairman Wood stopped the dialogue from Mr. Thorne by saying, "This is not a stage for something like this. If you have a problem, and you do work in the private sector, this Council is concerned only with the EMS in Laurens County. Your business is no business of ours. If you have a problem with your business, you can go to the Magistrate."



Mr. Thorne then stated that he was representing himself as a citizen of Laurens County. Continuing Mr. Thorn said, “My family members in Clinton and Hickory Tavern are being affected by this. Not to forget the EMS employees that also being affected by this. We are talking about EMS employees that are being followed to their homes. You are saying to me that this provider that has been coming here and backhandedly responding to calls, can come into my home and provide patient care. This is a great concern to me”.

Chairman Wood said, “You are saying that you are having problems. I have not heard of any problems from the County Administrator. Everything goes through a chain of command”. Mr. Thorne replied that it was actually brought up at a County Council meeting by an employee of the County EMS.

Chairman Wood said, “If there is a problem with EMS service, the Director of EMS will come to Administrator Segars and then it is brought to this Council. We are not going to bypass Mr. Segars. I appreciate what you do but it is not up to this Council to make your business grow. I’m in the welding business and if my business was in Laurens and it did not grow, I could not go to Council asking to help it grow”.

Mr. Thorne said, “I understand your perspective but I am bringing this to you all because of it not being addressed from the State level regarding providers like this. This is an ongoing issue in the County and we are not the only provider that has problems with this”.

Having no one wishing to address Council, Chairman Wood closed the session at 6:20 P.M.

COUNTY COUNCIL COMMENTS:

- 1.) Chairman Wood said, “We have tried to work with this situation and with the different ones that want to work in addition to the County EMS services. It is not our responsibility to run your business or handle anything in your business. It is your responsibility to make it grow”.
- 2.) Vice Chairman Tollison thanked the Staff for helping make the transition to the elected positions of Council an easier transition.
- 3.) Councilman Nash noted the passing of Sheriff Chastain’s sister passing away after a bad fall.
- 4.) Councilman Jones said, “I would like to see the issue pushed towards getting the Local Government Funds back. Since 2009, the State has been withholding that money. I want us to work smarter so the taxpayers won’t have to work harder. I also want to find cost savings in the current budget by finding new ways to do things that will provide more savings. The money retained by the State is coming from the taxpayers of Laurens County and it needs to come back to the County. It is almost a million dollars. With that we could do the repairs and build stations. I am passing a petition around to present to the Legislators to give us this money back”.
- 5.) Council Member Anderson said, “I to would appreciate the citizens of Laurens County to talk to the Legislators about returning these funds to the Counties. These funds can not go to the fire service building program but these monies can be utilized to help provide these services”.
- 6.) Councilman Pitts said, “I would like for this Council to reconsider the funding options for the Hunter Park project at the next meeting of Council. According to my notes there is over six hundred thousand dollars in that account. This money is designed to improve the Park and to attract other industry”.



Vice Chairman Tollison stated, "This fund is not designed just for Hunter Park. It also includes industrial parks in Clinton and Owings and is earmarked for economic development".

EXECUTIVE SESSION – COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION for Council to move into Executive Session at 6:30 P.M. to discuss an Employment matter"; VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

There was a COUNCIL CONSENSUS to reconvene in open session at 6:55 P.M.

Chairman Wood stated that no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT – With no further action required by Council, Chairman Wood adjourned the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty C. Walsh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Betty C. Walsh
Laurens County Clerk to Council